

Testimony of

Patricia Borjestedt

Newington Educator

Before the

Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

It is obvious that we have a teacher shortage in Connecticut. Teacher preparation candidates are dwindling. Many realize that they are unable to become a teacher and earn a living wage. We require teachers to earn advanced degrees and we are not compensated either in salary or in reimbursement. Passing the minimum teacher salary can help to remedy this problem. Today's teaching is drastically different than teaching even ten years ago. Teachers tend to the academic, emotional and physical health of their students. The pandemic years brought unparalleled stress to both students and teachers. As a teacher who taught online Kindergarten to 26 students, I often found that I was talking to and counseling parents after teaching. I needed to reassure them they were going to be ok and that their children would be ok. It's difficult to explain the emotional toll this took on me. This process continues even today. Teachers fill many roles for children and parents. But the stress of pandemic teaching is almost unbearable. I strongly encourage you to pass the Covid benefit enhancement. Finally, as a Kindergarten teacher, I strongly believe in play based learning and raising the kindergarten start age. I have been advocating for more play in Kindergarten for years only to have it fall on deaf ears. Play based learning allows children to develop executive functioning capacities far better than any other methodology.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

